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April 11, 2006

Mayor Gavin Newsom
City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett
San Francisco, CA 94102

RE: RESPONSE TO DE YOUNG LETTER ON HEALTHY SATURDAYS

Dear Mayor Newsom,

You may have received some phone calls from some individuals expressing concern about Supervisor McGoldrick's proposal for Healthy Saturdays in Golden Gate Park. No doubt these calls were generated by a letter sent by the de Young museum to its members on April 7, 2006. A copy of that letter is attached here.

It is unfortunate that the de Young leadership has sunk to such selfish desperation as to present its membership with a letter that includes false information and omits other key information. This includes the following:

- ⇒ The Healthy Saturdays legislation is only a six-month trial measure, not a permanent measure, as implied by the de Young's misleading letter. The de Young knows this but purposely omitted that information to stoke anxiety.
- ⇒ This proposal does not "severely compromise" access to the museum for anyone, not the disabled nor the elderly. Even with the partial closure to cars on JFK Dr., anyone can drive to the front door of the de Young museum to drop off passengers on any day of the week. All surface roads from the south side of the Park (such as MLK Dr.) and the Concourse roads themselves are open to anyone driving. And of course, from both the north and south sides of the Park, the 800-car garage is fully accessible by car for parking or for a 15-minute drop-off period (see attached maps).
- ⇒ The letter neglects to mention that the de Young museum (as well as the Academy of Sciences and the Friends of Recreation & Parks) publicly endorsed *this same proposal* in 2000 through its active support and funding of Proposition G, which called for car-free Saturdays on JFK Drive *once the garage was open*, which it now is. The following statement was included in the 2000 San Francisco ballot book, signed by Dede Wilsey and Harry Parker, of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco: "*Proposition G...Ensures access to the de Young Museum for all San Franciscans including families with children, seniors and the disabled....Allows for trial closures to study the impacts of Saturday closure on Golden Gate Park's neighbors, institutions and park users....Enacts Saturday closure after the opening of the Music Concourse underground parking facility....*" (See attached copy of full ballot argument.) Why is the de Young changing its story now?

- ⇒ Despite the de Young's incorrect statement, this issue has proven popular in past polls. The most recent poll figure we have seen, (from 2000 conducted by David Binder Research firm, attached here), showed 61% of voters support car-free Saturdays on JFK Dr. Please note that this poll was conducted *before* the garage was in place. We expect even greater support now.
- ⇒ It is misleading and elitist for the de Young to imply in its letter that the on-street parking spaces on JFK Dr. are solely, or even primarily, intended for its own use. There is no consideration by the museum of the many people using the Park itself. The de Young museum is a part of Golden Gate Park, not vice versa.
- ⇒ It is reprehensible that the de Young leaders would use their exhibits, such as *Chicano Visions* and the *Quilts of Gee's Bend*, as hostages in this discussion by threatening to cancel them if they do not get their way on this issue. This sort of cynical tokenism is an insult to the diverse communities the Park serves through all of its attractions, especially the universally affordable and accessible pleasures of car-free JFK Sundays, which for 39 years have drawn wider participation than any other event in the park.

I have heard from dozens of members of the de Young today who are appalled by the museum's dishonorable tactics and who are threatening to rescind their memberships in the de Young. I have included one such letter I received today.

The broad coalition of supporters firmly believe that the facts of the proposed Healthy Saturdays trial speak for themselves. We trust that you will see through the deceptive and dishonest statements the de Young is using to attempt to confuse the public and the city's decision makers.

As always, if you have any questions about this proposal, please do not hesitate to call me. I am eager to provide you with any information you need to make a well-informed decision for the city and the people who live, play, and visit here.

Sincerely,

Leah Shahum
Executive Director